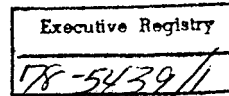


The Director
Central Intelligence Agency



Washington, D.C. 20505



11 MAY 1978

OLC RECORD COPY

OLC: 78-1914

Honorable Melvin Price, Chairman
Committee on Armed Services
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Mel:

I was pleased to note your thoughts in the Congressional Record of 27 April regarding Congressional access to sensitive security data.

I share your concern of the proliferation of access to sensitive security matters and look forward to working with the Congress in developing legislation to protect our Nation's secrets.

Yours,

/s/ Stansfield Turner

STANSFIELD TURNER

cc:
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CONGRESSIONAL RECORD—HOUSE

H 3319

CONGRESSIONAL ACCESS TO SENSITIVE SECURITY DATA

(Mr. PRICE asked and was given permission to extend his remarks at this point in the Record and to include extraneous matter.)

● Mr. PRICE. Mr. Speaker, I recently made an informal check of the access of committees of Congress to classified security information. To obtain an indication of the degree of the proliferation of sensitive security information in the Congress, I limited my review to the distribution of "Restricted Data" amongst the various committee. The concept of "Restricted Data," as defined in the Atomic Energy Act, concerns very sensitive defense and national security material related to nuclear energy and provides for which a unique system of control and dissemination is statutorily specified.

I must admit that my check into this matter revealed a disturbing trend. I found that about 15 individual committees and subcommittees of the House and Senate have access to "Restricted Data" and maintain individual files of varying amounts of such information. I also found that about 300 staff members have been authorized to have access to this sensitive information. Since the 1960's, the number of staff people having access to such data has increased by a factor of 10.

A fundamental principle of maintaining the security of sensitive information is to limit its distribution. In its simplest terms, this means limit the access to the minimum number of people consistent with getting the job done. I am concerned that this principle is being violated with the growth in access to this one type of specially sensitive security information to 15 separate organizations in the Congress alone.

I fully appreciate the need for a certain number of committees to have direct and ready access to information and files on sensitive security information. My plea is for the reduction of this access to the essential minimum. I believe this access could be reduced considerably by stricter compliance with the committee system of organization wherein specific responsibilities are assigned to individual committees. Strictly limiting access to the committee needing the information to carry out its responsibility will, I am sure, reduce the proliferation which is occurring.

Although I have not looked into the handling of other areas of sensitive national security information than Restricted Data, very probably similar unfavorable trends have developed in the treatment of such areas in the Congress. I firmly believe that we can greatly improve our treatment of these matters by reducing the number of congressional organizations handling such sensitive security information without relinquishing any congressional responsibilities or losing any legislative control in these areas.

I do not think we can overemphasize the importance of doing everything possible to safeguard sensitive security information. Loss of certain information could well result in the grave endanger-

ment of our national security. Without consideration of the nature of the specific matter involved, it is not possible to estimate the seriousness of the consequences which could ensue. Losses of certain sensitive security information in the past has, in my view, resulted in the nullification of literally billions of dollars in investment in our defense forces. Obviously there is probably no graver matter that we have to contend with than the proper handling and safeguarding of such security information.

The protection of sensitive security information is also directly related to the proliferation of nuclear weapons which is now such a great concern to many Members of this body. The availability of nuclear weapons technology, and in some cases only an incidental piece of information concerning our weapons program, could make it possible for a striving dissident or other foreign national group to attain nuclear weapon capability. The forces for such harmful diffusion of sensitive information are proportional to the number of sources of such information. We should, accordingly, reduce the number of organizations and people to whom such information is distributed. Although I have limited my comments to the Congress, the same factors and related dangers apply to all organizations.

The tightening up of how the Congress handles sensitive security information is also important relative to the carrying out of oversight responsibilities which the Congress has. Simply put, the only way we can be effective in exercising effective oversight responsibilities over the safeguard functions performed by the executive agencies is by exemplary performance.●

ARE THERE NO CUBAN CASUALTIES IN AFRICA?

(Mr. SIKES asked and was given permission to extend his remarks at this point in the Record and to include extraneous matter.)

● Mr. SIKES. Mr. Speaker, there has been a dearth of news about Cuban casualties in Africa. This is an unusual situation. Castro has sent 35,000 of his countrymen to fight Russia's wars for the colonial conquest of Africa. Much of Africa is not healthy for people who are not acclimatized, nor are the bullets of the people who continue to fight for the right to determine their own destiny. Unquestionably, there have been deaths and wounds in battle and deaths and illnesses from natural causes. We suffered many casualties in Vietnam, despite the best medical and hospital services ever devised in time of war. The Cubans have no such medical resources.

Information on the page of Cuban casualties is completely blank. The press in this country is able to ferret out the most minute secrets about America's defense system. Their efficiency should not stop at our borders. Yet no information has been given on Cuban casualties in Africa. One has to wonder whether this same dearth of information prevails inside Cuba. Surely the families whose loved ones are away on Castro's foreign

missions wonder about the fate of their missing relatives.

The Russian support system provided the Cuban forces is another story. Presumably, it is fully and capably organized. The Cubans did not walk to Africa. They go by aircraft or ship. They have been supplied with modern weapons, and presumably, with adequate food from Russia or elsewhere.

Castro's legions may soon be used for conquest in Central and South America. He is the captive of the Russians. If the Russians cut off assistance to Castro, his regime will collapse. So, supposedly, Castro will carry Russia's torch of conquest as long as a supply of young Cuban men is available.●

TO CLOSE THE KEY WEST NAVAL STATION?

● (Mr. SIKES asked and was given permission to extend his remarks at this point in the Record and to include extraneous matter.)

Mr. SIKES. Mr. Speaker, on the Navy's realignment list, just issued, is a study on the advisability of disestablishing the naval air station at Key West, Fla. I feel that it is not realistic to close this base. It played a very important part at the time of the Cuban missile crisis in 1962. If there should be trouble anywhere in the Caribbean, it may have a necessary function. The fact that we will no longer have a presence in Panama adds to the logic of maintaining a naval base at Key West. If, however, the study should result in the closure of the Key West facility, its mission could well be placed with the most important U.S. military installation left in the Caribbean. That facility is our naval installation at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. Increasingly, however, there are signs that Guantanamo is considered to be decreasing in importance, rather than being upgraded.

An article which appeared in U.S. News & World Report in February discusses recent trends at Guantanamo. Particularly in light of the announcement about Key West, it is now increasingly important that consideration be given to maintaining our forces at Guantanamo. I include the article at this point in the Record.●

"GITMO": TRANQUIL U.S. BASE AT CASTRO'S BACK DOOR

A strange quiet hovers over Guantanamo, America's 45-square-mile naval base in Cuba, after 20 years of threats by Fidel Castro to "oust the Yankees."

Suddenly the speeches have been toned down. The Cuban military guards who have patrolled the fence line around the base for years have been pulled back, out of sight. On the U.S. side, Marine guards no longer patrol the line.

Cuba's Communist leaders are clearly lifting their pressure to get U.S. forces out. The issue of "Gitmo," as the naval station at Guantanamo Bay is known locally, has not been raised in the bilateral talks being held between Washington and Havana in their "national-interest sections."

The reason is uncertain. But the guessing in Washington is that Castro is playing it low-key now in order to help his case for lifting the long-standing American trade em-